

**METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR SCANNING
AND STERILIZING MAIL RECEIVED AT A DROP BOX**

ABSTRACT

A drop box for receiving mail pieces for collection and delivery by a postal service
5 includes an enclosure having a slot sized for receiving mail pieces, a feeder positioned
inside the drop box for engaging and conveying mail pieces inserted into the slot, a
detector for detecting a potential contaminant inside the drop box, and a controller for
initiating a preprogrammed action when a potential contaminant is detected inside the drop
box. The preprogramed action may include locking the box and sounding an alarm
10 coupled to the controller. The drop box may also be equipped with means for sterilizing
the drop box and its contents such as a source of electromagnetic radiation and/or a source
of a chemical sterilizing agent.